

local businesses, the College of the Northern Marianas, the United States Secretary of the Interior and the United States Secretary of Commerce and shall assist in the development and implementation of such a training program. All expenditures, other than for the costs of Federal personnel, shall require a non-Federal matching contribution of 50 percent and the United States Secretary of Labor shall provide a report on activities to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate and the Committee on Resources and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives by March 1 of each year. The United States Secretary of Labor may supplement the funds provided under this section with other funds and resources available to him and shall undertake such other activities, pursuant to existing authorities of the Department, as he decides will assist in such a training program in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

(d) DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR OPERATIONS.—The Attorney General and the United States Secretary of Labor are authorized to establish and maintain Immigration and Naturalization Service, Executive Office for Immigration Review, and United States Department of Labor operations in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands for the purpose of performing their responsibilities under the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended, and under the transition program. To the extent practicable and consistent with the satisfactory performance of their assigned responsibilities under applicable law, the United States Departments of Justice and Labor shall recruit and hire from among qualified applicants resident in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands for staffing such operations.

(e) REPORT TO THE CONGRESS.—The President shall report to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and the House Committee on Resources, within six months after the fifth anniversary of the enactment of this Act, evaluating the overall effect of the transition program and the Immigration and Nationality Act on the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and at other times as the President deems appropriate. The report shall describe what efforts have been undertaken to diversify and strengthen the local economy, including, but not limited to, efforts to promote the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands as a tourist destination.

(f) LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF ALIEN WORKERS PRIOR TO APPLICATION OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT, AS AMENDED, AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRANSITION PROGRAM.—During the period between enactment of this Act and the effective date of the transition program established under section 6 of Public Law 94-241, as amended by this Act, the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands shall not permit an increase in the total number of alien workers who are present in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands on the date of enactment of this Act.

(g) APPROPRIATIONS.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this section and of the Immigration and Nationality Act with respect to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair. I compliment the Chair for her diligence and expedience in resolving this CNMI effort that has languished so long in this body. It is nice to see something concluded.

## MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period for the transaction of routine morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

## MAKING WORK PAY FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Mr. BAYH. Madam President, I rise today to speak in support of increasing the minimum wage. I am aware that the bankruptcy reform bill that we recently passed in this chamber contains an amendment that will increase the minimum wage by \$1 over a three-year period. While I voted for passage of the final bill, the minimum wage amendment it contained was constructed in a way that is sure to draw a Presidential veto, thereby endangering not only a wage increase for working families but also the months of work that all of us have put into reforming our bankruptcy laws.

The amendment that the bill contained was deeply flawed. I hope that the amendment will be stripped in conference so that we can send a bankruptcy reform bill to the President that he will sign. Then, perhaps we can move forward on a real increase in the minimum wage, perhaps in a package that contains some meaningful tax cuts for small business.

Madam President, we are living in a time of unprecedented economic prosperity. A few days ago, we reached an important milestone: We are now enjoying the longest economic expansion in our nation's history. Economic growth has been so strong that in 17 of the last 24 quarters, real GDP grew at a rate of three percent or more. Innovation, productivity, and fiscal discipline have all contributed to this expansion. Unemployment is at historic lows, real wages are increasing for many, and we have replaced welfare with work in record numbers.

But not everyone is realizing the prosperity many have enjoyed. While many workers in the economy have enjoyed sizeable raises, those workers at the bottom are still working hard just to make ends meet. Consider a minimum wage worker, working 40 hours a week. We want this worker to stay off of welfare, to be a responsible citizen and contribute to society, yet the minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour allows this worker to earn just \$10,700—nearly \$3,000 below the poverty level for a family of three. Add to this the fact that most of these workers receive no pension or paid vacation, few receive child care, and many lack employer-provided health insurance. There is no question that it is very difficult in our society to be a worker at the very bottom of the income scale.

It is important that we recognize the contributions that these workers make

to our economy and our society, and that we act to ensure that the purchasing power of their income does not erode over time. Today's minimum wage is more than 20 percent lower in real terms than it was in 1979. The proposed increase to \$6.15 simply restores the minimum wage back to its purchasing power in 1982. Would any of us deny that it's just as tough, or tougher, for a low-income family to make ends meet today as it was in 1982?

Raising the minimum wage by \$1 an hour will directly help more than 11 million workers and their families, as well as the millions more earning between the current minimum of \$5.15 and the new minimum of \$6.15 who will also see their wages rise. It will reward the responsibility of these workers with a more living wage. It will send the message that we understand that being a member of the "working poor" is one of the toughest places to be in America, with obstacles to reaching the middle class turning up at every turn. Raising the minimum wage would reduce one such obstacle. Nearly 200,000 workers in Indiana would benefit directly from a minimum wage increase.

Some argue that raising the minimum wage will lead to higher unemployment. I am happy to say that has not been the case in Indiana. Since September 1996, the last time the Senate passed a minimum wage increase, 133,000 new jobs have been created in my home state. Unemployment has dropped by 26 percent and now stands at 2.9 percent, significantly lower than the national average.

The good news in this debate is that it appears we all agree the minimum wage should be increased. We have our differences over the timing but by and large both Republicans and Democrats realize it is time to make work pay.

The bad news is that there is a poison pill buried in this legislation. At the same time that they seek to raise the take home pay of working families, the Republican minimum wage proposal contains a provision that could reduce the wages of approximately 73 million American workers who are eligible to receive overtime pay.

This overtime pay repeal provision would allow employers to eliminate the requirement that bonuses, commissions, and other forms of compensation based on productivity, quality and efficiency be part of a worker's "regular rate" of pay for purposes of calculating overtime pay. Eliminating this provision, and allowing bonuses to be excluded from overtime pay, would nullify the purposes for which the Fair Labor Standards Act was created. Employers would be provided an incentive to slash hourly pay rates or reduce the number of new jobs they create. Such cynical actions explain why so many Americans are frustrated with politics.

Raising the minimum wage is something that most Americans regard as fair, given our economic prosperity, and 75 to 80 percent support an increase in every opinion poll. Yet some refuse